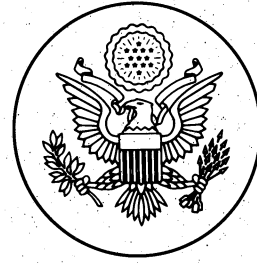


**ANNUAL REPORT  
1994**



**THE UNITED STATES  
COMMISSION  
FOR THE PRESERVATION  
OF  
AMERICA'S HERITAGE  
ABROAD**

**Preserving monuments, historic buildings, and cemeteries associated with the foreign heritage of American citizens, honors the past, imparts meaning to the present and advances mutual cooperation and friendship between countries.**

**1101 Fifteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20005 (202) 254-3824**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 1994**

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

In 1990 Congress provided the initial appropriation to support the work of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad in response to growing concerns about the deterioration and destruction of cultural sites in Eastern and Central Europe of significance to United States citizens.



Rabbi Arthur Schneier  
Chairman

Since 1990, the region has experienced dramatic changes in both the political and social climates. A rising tide of nationalism has led to the establishment of new republics and a willingness to work together in areas of common interest. Never before have opportunities been greater to contribute to the protection and preservation of our heritage abroad.

The Commission, in collaboration with the Department of State, has concluded and signed Agreements for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Properties with three Eastern and Central European countries and is actively negotiating with a number of other countries. The Commission has moved rapidly to establish relationships with 22 countries, the first steps in the sometimes long and delicate negotiation process.

The most recent Agreement negotiated by the Commission was signed by Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatoli Zlenko, at the White House on March 4. It affirmed both countries' dedication to preserving shared cultural heritage. The Ukraine Agreement covers the full spectrum of historic sites and is of interest to Americans of all faiths who hail from Ukraine.

Public support, however, is essential to transform growing opportunities into realities. The annual Congressional appropriation covers only part of the modest costs of negotiating the Agreements with foreign governments. All costs for projects concerning the protection and preservation of cultural sites must come from private citizens and organizations.

Already, hundreds of such sites are threatened by deterioration and destruction. But, with the support of organizations and individuals throughout the United States, much of the destruction can be stopped.

The Commissioners wish to note, with gratitude, the cooperation and support they have received from the White House, the United States Congress, and the U.S. Department of State.

## INTRODUCTION

*"Because the fabric of a society is strengthened by visible reminders of the historical roots of the society, it is in the national interest of the United States to encourage the preservation and protection of the cemeteries, monuments and historical buildings associated with the foreign heritage of American citizens."*

These are the opening words in the legislation establishing the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

The legislation mandates the Commission to:

- (1) "identify and publish a list of those cemeteries, monuments, historic buildings located abroad which are in danger of deterioration or destruction;
- (2) encourage the preservation and protection of such sites by obtaining, in cooperation with the Department of State, assurances from foreign governments that the cemeteries, monuments, buildings will be preserved and protected; and
- (3) prepare and disseminate reports on the condition of and the progress toward preserving and protecting such cemeteries, monuments, historic buildings."

## STRUCTURE OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission is made up of 21 members, appointed by the President of the United States. The President designates the Chairman of the Commission from among its members. In addition, the Commission has established the Associates of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad to raise funds from the private sector to support Commission projects to protect and preserve monuments, historic buildings and cemeteries.



## NEGOTIATIONS & AGREEMENTS

The Commission's operations, have been marked by numerous significant events and achievements.

During the first two years, the Commission was authorized to negotiate Agreements with six coun-

tries: Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, and Yugoslavia.

Rapid emergence of independent Republics, free to pursue their own cultural identities and interests has led to increased expressions of

interest in the Commission's programs and activities.

As a result, the Commission, working with the Department of State, has requested and been authorized to negotiate the proposed Agreement with sixteen additional countries, bringing the full number to twenty-two.

**The U.S. Commission  
is now authorized to make  
agreements with 22 countries  
in Central and Eastern Europe  
for the preservation of  
historic sites.**

Armenia  
Austria  
Azerbaijan  
Belarus  
Bosnia  
Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Czech Republic  
Estonia  
Georgia  
Germany  
Hungary  
Latvia  
Lithuania  
Macedonia  
Moldova  
Poland  
Romania  
Russian Federation  
Slovak Republic  
Slovenia  
Ukraine

### CZECH AND SLOVAK FEDERAL REPUBLIC

#### *The First Agreement*

The first Agreement negotiated by the Commission was concluded with the Czech and Slovak

Federal Republic and signed on March 17, 1992. The signing ceremony, conducted at the Department of State, was highlighted by the participation of Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. Lawrence Eagleburger, who signed the Agreement on behalf of the United States, and the late Ambassador Rita Klimova who signed for the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic.

Prior to the dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Republic, in January 1993, often referred to as the velvet divorce, representatives of the two new Republics notified the Commission of their respective decisions to comply with the provisions of the Agreement.

## UKRAINE

### *The White House event*

At a White House ceremony Presidents Bill Clinton and Leonid Kravchuk concluded a State visit on March 4, 1994 with the signing of several important Agreements at a White House ceremony. One of these Agreements, signed by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Ukraine's foreign Minister Anatoli Zlenko, was for the *Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage*.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier, Chairman of the Commission, led the nearly two-year negotiation of the Agreement with President Kravchuk and Foreign Minister Zlenko.

The White House press release noted, "the Agreement with Ukraine



President Clinton, Ukraine President Kravchuk, and Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Robert E. Dalton witness Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Ukraine Foreign Minister Zlenko sign the *Agreement on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage*, Washington, D.C. March 4, 1994. Photo courtesy, AP/World Wide

is particularly significant since it is the first with a nation formerly a part of the Soviet Union." As with all such Agreements, it will be administered on behalf of the United States by the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.



Above: Chairman Arthur Schneier (left), Ukrainian Foreign Minister Guennadi I. Oudovenko (seated left), and Ukrainian President Leonid Danylovich Kuchma (standing front, right) meet to discuss the newly-signed agreement.

Left: A pathway under construction in Babi-Yar; Ukraine to memorialize victims of World War II. Photo by Eva Seligman-Kennard

## ROMANIA

### *After the revolution, provisional agreement initiated*

The second Agreement was concluded with the Government of Romania. Chairman Arthur Schneier initiated a dialogue with key Romanian officials in Washington and New York. These efforts continued during his July 1992 meetings with high-level Romanian officials in Bucharest and culminated in the conclusion of a provisional Agreement which was signed by Adrian Nastase, the Romanian Foreign Minister and Chairman Schneier. Following an exchange of diplomatic notes, the agreement entered into force on July 29, 1993.

# THE BALTIC STATES

## *Negotiations initiated*

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### ESTONIA

#### *Anticipated Agreement*

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Commissioner Lavine visited Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius in July 1993 where he had fruitful meetings with key officials in the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs. He met with community leaders to explain the work of the Commission and the provisions of the proposed Agreement. He also met with officials at the American Embassies, including Ambassador Frasure in Tallinn and Ambassador Silins in Riga.

Useful and beneficial meetings and discussions have continued with officials of the Estonian Embassy and several proposed texts have been exchanged for examination and comment. It is anticipated that an Agreement will be concluded in the near future.

### LITHUANIA

#### *Involving U.S. Citizens*

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Recent discussions with Dr. Alfonsas Eidintas, Lithuanian Ambassador, were useful in exchanging views and information concerning the proposed Agreement. The Ambassador asked the Commission's assistance in identifying appropriate leaders from the American-Lithuanian community to participate in a meeting at the Embassy in the near future.

### LATVIA

#### *Further discussions, clarifications*

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The Commission has provided clarification on several points of concern to the Latvian authorities in anticipation of active discussions in the coming year.



Wojciech Henrykowski, local volunteer, at left and the town architect of Wyszow, Poland, survey a farm where hundreds of gravestones were unearthed.



Cemetery ruins in Ukrainian farmland. Photo by Abe Mendel



### AUSTRIA

#### *A working understanding*

---

An Austrian-American Contact Group has been established to discuss matters of mutual interest concerning the preservation of the respective cultures in the United States and Austria.

Commissioner Dov Zakheim and Minister Dr. Rainer serve as Joint-Chairmen of the Group, which

held its most recent meeting in Vienna in January, 1994.

The Austrian government will prepare written reports in response to a list of sites needing preservation, a request for maintenance of the former concentration camp Mathausen, as well as future measures for preservation.



The Commission's responsibilities, mandated by legislation, are to protect and preserve foreign cultural sites in Eastern and Central Europe of importance to U.S. citizens. Each Agreement establishes responsibilities and provides a mechanism for cooperation between the signatories.

The Commission responds to expressions of interest and concern from U.S. citizens about requirements for protection and preservation throughout Eastern and Central Europe and elsewhere, as warranted.

Actions by the Commission fall into two broad categories: responding to emergencies and assisting U.S. Citizens and organizations.

## RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

The Commission reacts to emergencies reported either directly to the Commission by U.S. citizens or referred by members of Congress on behalf of their constituents. Emergencies are defined as sudden threats to the integrity of the sites such as actions taken by local governments or individuals to limit access, damage caused by inappropriate development projects, dumping of refuse, or failure to protect sites from vandalism.

Emergencies are typically addressed by the Commission, in concert with the Department of State, through an investigation and, where appropriate, by petition for relief from the appropriate governmental authorities. This procedure is particularly effective in those countries with which the Commission has entered into the formal agreements.

The Commission's Subcommittee on Cemetery Preservation, co-chaired by Commissioners Julius Berman, Chaskel Besser and Zvi Kestenbaum, specifically handles preservation efforts of cemeteries, often targets of abuse and neglect.

## Case Studies...

### NOVA MESTA, SLOVAK REPUBLIC *Destruction halted*

The Commission received reports that the local government authorities of Nova Mesta in the Slovak Republic were destroying a cemetery of importance to U.S. citizens who trace their cultural heritage to that area. The matter was brought to the attention of Michal Kovac, President of the Slovak Republic. Representatives of his office and the U.S. Embassy went to Nova Mesta and met with local officials. As a result the destructive activities were halted and dialogue was revived between the factions aimed at reaching an equitable resolution of the situation.

### UMAN, UKRAINE *Graves preserved*

Local authorities in Uman, Ukraine were reported to be digging a trench for a public works project through the Jewish cemetery. This site is considered "most holy" by many thousands of Americans who annually visit the grave of a renowned religious leader.

Chairman Schneier contacted the foreign minister of Ukraine to appeal for a cessation of further work on this project until a mutually satisfactory resolution could be found. Work was subsequently rerouted to avoid further damage to the graves.



## ASSISTING U.S. CITIZENS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The Commission also assists U.S. citizens and organizations, cooperating with foreign governments and organizations in initiating projects to restore and preserve cultural sites.

The number of threatened sites far exceeds the financial resources available in these countries and the Commission receives no appropriated funds for directly undertaking needed restoration and preservation. Therefore, the development of partnerships with American ethnic groups with strong ties to Eastern and Central Europe are vital for the advancement of preservation and restoration projects.

First, surveys of cultural sites and dissemination of information on preservation needs act as a catalyst for private action. Many U.S. citizens and organizations have undertaken individual restoration projects.

Second, the Commission provides technical assistance to individuals and organizations and assists them in raising funds from the private sector. The Commission, when necessary, will assist individuals or organizations to obtain the necessary permits and access from the local governments which exercise responsibility for such sites.

## Case Studies . . .

### POLNA, CZECH REPUBLIC *Battling Ethnic Prejudice*

Listed in the Annex to the Agreement with the Czech Republic, is the remains of a 17th century synagogue in the small town of Polna. The synagogue is a historical, cultural and political priority of the Czech government, as it served as a stimulus for religious and philosophical battles throughout the 20th century.

In March 1899, a young Jewish cobbler, Leopold Hilsner, was falsely accused of "the Jewish ritual" murder of a young woman. He was subsequently tried and convicted. Tomas Masaryk, then a Professor at Prague University, after reviewing the accusations and the trial proceedings, concluded that the charges were the result of an old racial superstition. He wrote a series of articles exposing the political misuse of anti-semitism in this case which were published throughout the world.

Masaryk and his American wife soon became the object of insults and hatred. But he persevered, and eventually his efforts led to a change of attitude toward the Jews among the majority of the Czech population. Later, as President of Czechoslovakia, he was able to cite this painful incident as his greatest moral victory.

Today there are no Jews in Polna and the synagogue, out of use for many decades and neglected during the Communist era, stands a shell. The local authorities and the Jewish community have initiated a five-year project to rebuild the Synagogue and the Rabbi's house as a museum of Jewish history in Polna, and to honor Masaryk's role in fighting ethnic bigotry.

The Commission is working as a co-sponsor of this restoration project and is urgently and actively seeking support for this worthy project from the private sector.



# PROTECTION      PRESERVATION      MEMORIALIZATION

## WYSZKOW, POLAND *Rediscovering heroes*

In the course of the 1990 survey of the cultural sites of Poland, the Commission learned of the devastated cemetery in the town of Wyszkw, 57 kilometers from Warsaw.

Wyszkw was also the home of 5,000 Holocaust victims, including Mordecai Anielewicz, leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. As such, it is of particular significance as a memorial site to the Holocaust in Poland.

The restoration appeared especially daunting as the Nazis had removed all tombstones and any visible signs that once this area had been a cemetery. For example, several hundred tombstones had been used to build sidewalks and used in other construction. The local government, which now exercises re-



Gravestones make up the foundation of a Polish farmhouse. Photo by Wojciech Henrykowski

sponsibility for the property, indicated its willingness to work with the Commission to erect a fence and restore a portion of the cemetery, and to maintain the grounds once the project was completed.

The Commission was determined to take the lead in this project and to raise funds from private donors to cover the costs. With the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw providing oversight, the tombstones were recovered, archi-

tectural plans were approved by the Commission and the Jewish Community of Warsaw and the local government authorities issued the necessary permits.

A group of American citizens, headed by Commissioner Israel Rubin, helped fund this Commission project. The work is expected to be completed by the spring of 1995.

The Commission, local government and organizations, and private sector donors, successfully cooperated toward a common goal.

## BABI-YAR, UKRAINE

### *Unearthing a city's past*

On the outskirts of Kiev, Ukraine lie the fields of Babi-Yar, the infamous site of the massacre of 200,000 Jews, Ukrainians and others during the Holocaust. After the fall of communism, a Jewish memorial was built on the site

In August 1991 the newly independent Ukraine, as a gesture of reconciliation and to promote a revival of Jewish religious and cultural life, sponsored a 50th Anniversary Memorial Service for those who died at Babi-Yar. The Commission sponsored a commemoration in New York of the 50th anniversary of the Babi-Yar massacre. Following this event, Chairman Schneier served as a member of the U.S. Delegation to the memorial service in Kiev.

In 1992, Albert Barr of San Rafael, California, was strolling through the woods adjacent to the Memorial at Babi-Yar, when he came upon the remnants of an old



Ghostly cemeteries are often the greatest sources of history and heritage

Jewish cemetery which had long since disappeared beneath a thick cover of vegetation and been forgotten by time. No records existed marking the cemetery which was located just 50 yards away from the Memorial.

Members of the Kiev community sought and received permission from the city authorities to clear the site and build a fence and walkway linking the

cemetery and the memorial. Local citizens are volunteering their services to the restoration process.

The Commission is officially co-sponsoring the project with the Bay Area Council for Jewish Rescue and Renewal, a private not-for-profit organization. Funds were raised from private sector donors and the project was completed in the Fall of 1994.

A worker unearthes lost gravestones in the fields of Wyszkwow.



Photo by Wojciech Henrykowski

# CULTURAL HERITAGE SURVEYS



Dr. Eleanor Bergman, co-director of the survey in Poland, examining a restoration site.

A cornerstone of the Commission's work is the compilation and maintenance of a clearinghouse of information on cultural sites in Eastern and Central Europe that are associated with the cultural heritage of United States citizens. The surveys are designed to provide for the collection and organization of related data on the location of these sites, their current condition and ownership, and other significant indicators.

While appropriated funds are authorized for the purpose of conducting these surveys, the Commission augments these funds with private donations.

## Survey work is carried out in five phases:

- Organization and planning, including meetings with government officials and members of the affected ethnic and religious communities; refinement of the survey instrument; design of the computer program; contracting for work with local individuals and organizations best equipped to undertake the collection of information;
- Adaption and translation of existing and survey material to project specifications; pilot testing and extensive site visits;
- Preparation and in-putting of collected data in the computer data base;
- Analysis of the information; and
- Dissemination to the public.

## POLAND, HUNGARY, UKRAINE, CZECH AND SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Between 1990 and 1994 four countries were surveyed—Poland, Hungary, The Czech Republic and The Slovak Republic. In every case the governments of these countries provided available information and endorsement of the work. In the spring of 1994, the Commission began the survey of Ukraine in cooperation with Ukrainian organizations and interested government agencies.

As they have been identified, sites of special significance have been designated for discussions with each of these countries. Reports prepared on the condition of and the progress toward preservation and protection will also provide a basis for informing potential private sector donors of the need for financial support.

In 1994 the Commission released the first of a series of reports, Survey Of Historic Jewish Monuments In Poland. This report met with unprecedented demand from the public, and is now in its second printing.

The Commission will issue additional reports for the Surveys of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic and Ukraine in 1995.

These surveys will be expanded to other countries of Eastern and Central Europe as resources become available.

## U.S. Holocaust Memorial Warsaw Institute

Also in 1994, the Commission reached an agreement with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC to install an archive of cultural sites for the use of Holocaust survivors and the general public seeking information about the condition of their family cemeteries, religious buildings and monuments. Similar archives have been established at the Commission Offices and at the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw.

## PUBLIC AWARENESS & PARTICIPATION

Press releases on the survey of cultural sites inform hundreds of people and organizations interested in information related to their cultural heritage abroad. As the Commission continues to obtain and compile records, it will be equipped to respond more fully and accurately to requests for such information.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

#### Cleveland, Ohio Ukrainian Ethnic Community

The Commission also is embarking on an outreach program in order to establish linkages to the many associations representing American ethnic groups with strong ties to Eastern and Central Europe.

For example, following the announcement of the signing of the

Agreement on the *Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage* with the Government of Ukraine, the Commission was contacted by representatives of the Ukrainian ethnic community in the Cleveland area. As a result, Commission staff met with a group of community representatives which included:

George Bilokonsky, who represents the Ukrainian-American Joint Venture *Eric Raiduha, Inc.* and the *Raiduha Business Bulletin*; Walter Bubna, who represents the Ukrainian Museum-Archives of Cleveland; and Ihor Koval, who represents business interests of newly arrived immigrants from Ukraine. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the work of the Commission and to identify areas of mutual interest.



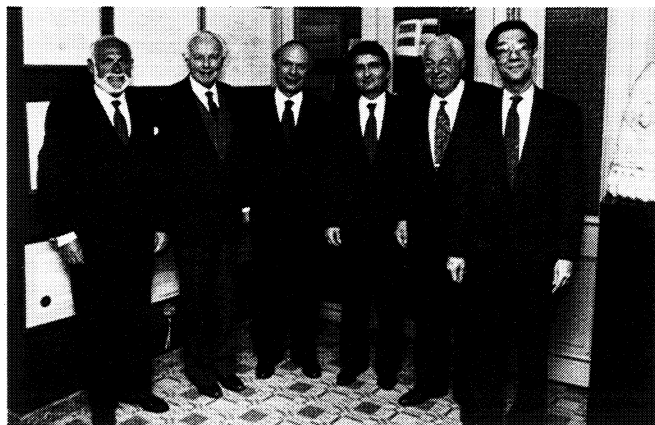
George Bilokonsky, Walter Bubna and Andrew Fedynsky, director of the Ukrainian Museum-Archives in Cleveland, Ohio.

This group views the Commission as an ideal mechanism to assist in identifying and supporting projects to preserve cultural sites, such as churches and Christian cemeteries in Ukraine. Meeting participants are continuing to discuss ways in which common interests and needs can be addressed, including raising funds within the community.

#### New York Commemoration 50th Anniversary of Hungarian Holocaust

On March 20, 1994 the Commission sponsored in New York a Commemoration marking the 50th anniversary of the ten month Hungarian Holocaust which took the lives of 600,000 Jews. The Commemoration was attended by over 400 U.S. citizens of Hungarian descent, many of them Holocaust survivors or their children. The event was led by the Chairman of the Commission and Spiritual Leader of the World Federation of Hungarian Jews, Rabbi Arthur Schneier.

Many leaders of the Hungarian and Jewish communities participated in this solemn occasion, including His Excellency Andre Erdos, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations and the Honorable Tom Lantos, Congressman from California and the only Holocaust survivor in the U.S. Congress.



Left to right: Mr. Norman Gati, President of World Federation of Hungarian Jews; Congressman Tom Lantos; Chairman Arthur Schneier; Ambassador Andre Erdos of Hungary; Mr. Gaby Newmark, Chairman of the Board, World Federation of Hungarian Jews; Mr. Tsurriel Raphael, Deputy Consul General of Israel in New York.

As a result of this event, the Commission received inquiries for information on several hundred cultural sites in Hungary and donations for survey work.



## FUNDRAISING

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Since funds appropriated by Congress support only limited survey work and administrative costs of the Commission, resources for the preservation and restoration work of the Commission must be raised from the private sector.

To facilitate this, the Associates of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, a not-for-profit organization, was established and organized in early 1992. Distinguished Americans have agreed to serve on the Board of Directors led by Mr. William McSweeney, who serves as President. Most of the funds for the model restoration projects described in this report were raised by the Associates.



**United States Commission  
for the Preservation  
of America's Heritage Abroad**

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Chairman  
New York, NY

Honorable Julius Berman  
Forest Hills, NY

Honorable Chaskel Besser  
New York, NY

Honorable Hertz Frankel  
Brooklyn, NY

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